



30 Average number, in millions, of fry (25) and fingerling (5) walleye that FWP hatcheries produce for stocking each year in lakes and reservoirs.

Prudent outdoor play

FWP recently joined the Recreate Responsibly Coalition, which promotes commonsense guidelines for having fun outdoors during the Covid-19 pandemic. Among the coalition's guidelines:

- **Know Before You Go:** Check the status of the place you want to visit. If it's closed, don't go. If it's crowded, have a backup plan.
- **Plan Ahead:** Prepare for facilities to be closed, pack a lunch, and bring essentials like hand sanitizer and a face covering.
- **Explore Locally:** Limit long-distance travel and make use of local parks, trails, and public spaces. Be mindful of your impact on the communities you visit.
- **Practice Physical Distancing:** Keep your group size small. Be prepared to cover your nose and mouth and give others space. If you are sick, stay home.
- **Leave No Trace:** Respect public lands and waters, native and local communities, and private property. Take all your garbage with you. ■



A pallid bat, one of 15 species in Montana, skims a pond at night in search of insects.

WILDLIFE CELEBRATIONS

2020 Bat Week goes virtual

For the third consecutive year, FWP and librarians across Montana are teaming up to promote Bat Week.

Bat Week, held October 24-31 to correspond with Halloween, celebrates these winged mammals, their fascinating behaviors, and their important role in nature with lectures by bat experts, bat arts and crafts, and even bat-themed baking.

This year's programs will be held online to maintain social distancing protocols, says Amelea Kim, lifelong learning librarian for the Montana State Library. Participants can watch videos starring the Bat Squad—kids who talk about all the cool things bats do, why bats matter, threats facing bats, and what people can do to help. Bat Week participants can also learn how to make bat capes, bat houses, and insect-flavored or bat-shaped cookies. Crossword puzzles, word finders, coloring pages, and other fun projects will also be available online.

New this year is a competition, open to

Montana high school students, for the best one- to three-minute video on why bats are important. FWP will post top-ranked videos on its Facebook page and other social media. The top-scoring video will win \$500 donated by the Outdoor Legacy Foundation.

Entries are due October 16.

Lauri Hanauska-Brown, chief of the FWP Nongame Wildlife Bureau, says she's encouraged that so many librarians have embraced Bat Week. "Their outreach to local communities is making a huge difference in promoting bat conservation across Montana," she says.

Bat Week events and programs are held throughout the United States and Canada. Partners include the National Park Service,

Parks Canada, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Bat Conservation International. For more information, visit batweek.org.

For Montana-specific information and details on the high school bat video competition, visit FWP's Facebook page at facebook.com/MontanaFWP/. ■



During Bat Week, kids can receive free fun items like this "I'm Batty about Bats" sticker.

FISH CONNECTIVITY

Go fish, go!

The next time you catch a trout, consider how far it might have swum and how many obstacles it had to overcome to get there.

Earlier this year, FWP biologists documented a 21-inch rainbow trout migrating more than 150 miles. The 3.5-pound fish was first captured in the Thompson Falls fish ladder, part of a NorthWestern Energy hydropower facility on the Clark Fork River. It was fitted with a small ID marker and released upstream of the Thompson Falls Dam.

A month later, FWP biologists working on Johnson Creek, a tributary of the Black-

foot River, found the fish. It likely hatched in the creek years earlier and had returned to its natal waters to spawn, as rainbow trout do.

"This is the first documentation of a fish moving from the lower Clark Fork all the way up into the Blackfoot River system," says Jon Hanson, a NorthWestern fisheries biologist.

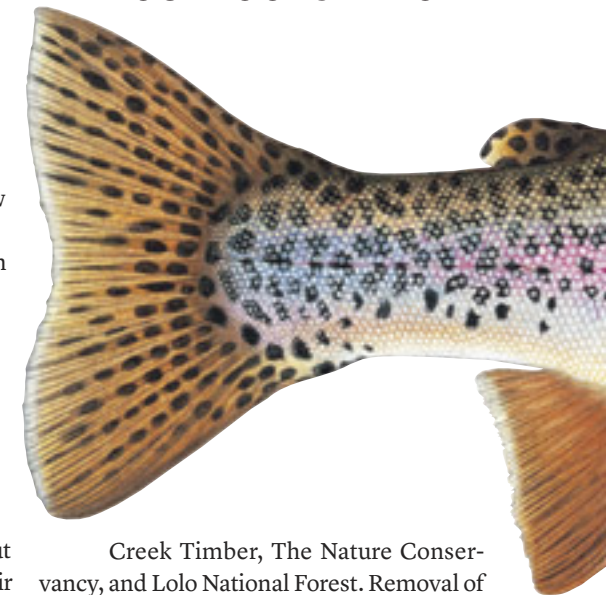
For decades, trout in this river system faced myriad manmade obstacles to migration. Many barriers have been removed in recent years, though, and now fish are free to freely swim up- and downstream. "Trout need to move long distances to complete their life cycle," says David Schmetterling, head of the FWP fisheries research program. "It takes

a lot of work by a lot of organizations to remove the barriers and maintain clean, cold water so that can happen."

Various partner groups and agencies including Trout Unlimited and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service removed three culverts blocking fish passage on Johnson Creek. A road was decommissioned, reducing sedimentation in the creek, and land was acquired and conserved by Plum



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: ILLUSTRATION BY JOSEPH TOMELLER; SHUTTERSTOCK; MAP BY LIKE DURAN/MONTANA OUTDOORS



Creek Timber, The Nature Conservancy, and Lolo National Forest. Removal of Bonner and Milltown Dams by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency eliminated two major fish barriers. The Thompson Falls fish ladder, completed in 2011, allowed the trout to access the lower Clark Fork River.

Schmetterling adds that rainbow trout aren't the only fish species that migrate such distances. FWP biologists have also documented pallid sturgeon, cutthroat trout, blue suckers, bull trout, and sauger making journeys of over 100 miles. "To enhance or restore populations of native fish in our rivers, we have to consider scale," he says. "Many species rely on huge connected water systems that flow across large landscapes." ■

Great American Outdoors Act passes

Congress has fulfilled an outdoors recreation promise it made more than half a century ago to communities across the United States. On July 22, the U.S. House voted 310-107 to approve the Great American Outdoors Act, which secures permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Voting 73 to 25, the U.S. Senate passed the bill in June. President Donald Trump signed the landmark legislation on August 4.

Hailed as one of the most important conservation bills to pass in decades, the act will nearly eliminate a \$12 billion National Park Service maintenance backlog and fully fund the LWCF for the first time since it was enacted in the 1960s. Though the program was permanently authorized last year, funding was not guaranteed.

The Great American Outdoors Act will provide \$900 million in federal oil and gas revenues annually for the LWCF, which funds new trails, parks, playgrounds, ball fields, and other outdoor recreation sites.

The LWCF, which is administered in Montana by the FWP Parks Division, has been used to purchase more than 800 recreation sites across the state. In western Montana, it has helped communities keep timberlands in production while protecting public access and habitat for elk and other wildlife. In eastern Montana towns, the federal program has paid for ball parks, park pavilions, and municipal swimming pools. It also helps pay for conservation easements that preserve open spaces and wildlife habitat on working ranchlands. ■

The act will help with maintenance backlogs at Glacier and other national parks.

